



The American Strength Program

A Project of the American Conservative Union

Mission Statement

Advocating priority investment in two core federal responsibilities recognized in the U.S. Constitution—national defense and transportation infrastructure—that foster personal freedom by providing national security and facilitating a robust market economy.

Case Statement

There is a much-needed conversation now taking place across the nation about the appropriate role of the federal government in our society. As constitutional conservatives, we don't believe the federal government should be called on to carry too heavy a burden, as most tasks are better handled by the states. Our Founding Fathers understood and agreed, however, that there are two areas where the federal government does have a role to play and whether it was in the Federalist Papers or the Constitution, they made clear what those discreet areas were: defense and transportation infrastructure.

Both these areas have explicit constitutional authorization. Furthermore, the security and mobility assured by the federal government is essential to the American ideals of freedom and self-sufficiency.

Since the beginning of our nation, the ability to defend ourselves has been a signature characteristic of the American experience. The U.S. transportation infrastructure network not only provides every individual the ability to move about the country, it is also the circulatory system of the U.S. economy supporting virtually every American business and millions of jobs and is a critical national security, emergency response and defense asset. While it is part of our heritage to question the role and size of government, defense and transportation infrastructure activities are national in scope and require federal leadership and investment.

Constitutional conservatives recognize that not all government expenditures are equal. There is spending on the day-to-day general operations and services of government. Then there are public investments in our national security—which must be ever present—and in tangible structures like our transportation capital stock that provide many years of recurring economic and social returns and benefits. These investments are core, constitutional federal responsibilities and should be so treated in the allocation of federal resources.

Our Founding Fathers created an enduring balance between public officials and the U.S. military. This balance has not only stood the test of time, but it has ensured our national defense is an unquestioned federal priority. In the transportation area, the federal government should identify national objectives and then provide state and local governments with the tools and resources necessary to achieve these goals within the state's own long-range transportation plans and respecting their individual project decisions.

The American Strength Program

The American Conservative Union (ACU) is the nation's oldest conservative organization, formed in 1964 to reinvigorate the conservative movement after Barry Goldwater's election defeat. ACU has a long history of advocacy to influence policy battles in Washington and the 50 states.

The new American Strength program will have three tenets to accomplish the overarching goal of returning the federal government to its constitutionally delegated role:

- The first part will be an active program internet website and symposia focused on educating legislators on the proper constitutional role of the federal government, including national defense and transportation infrastructure.
- Secondly, American Strength will build a coalition of conservative leaders and elected officials to further the program's goals. We intend to support the coalition and our education program with advertising within the Washington Beltway.
- Finally, the program will utilize existing ACU programs—including the high visibility annual CPAC events and the ACU legislative ratings, the "gold standard" for elected officials—to continue to educate the public on the constitutional role of the federal government.

The Coalition for American Strength: A Strategic Alliance under the ACU Banner

It is the ACU's plan to reach out to other organizations, firms, elected officials and individuals, who share our view that the national defense and our nation's transportation infrastructure are constitutionally grounded core federal responsibilities and should be treated as such in policy and budget decision making. Together, we will financially support the American Strength program and drive its policy agenda.